

Submission

of the

Joint Revolutionary Council

[Comprising the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta MEND, The Reformed Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force RNDPVF & The Martyrs Brigade]



The Niger Delta Technical Committee

October 2008

October 13, 2008

Dear All,

In the past few weeks, especially after our declaration of ceasefire, we have been under pressure to participate in the current efforts at charting a new course to bring peace and development to the Niger Delta through the inauguration of the Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC).

Even though we remained skeptical, it is our belief that it will be in our strategic interest to make our submissions so that we would have the right to condemn it where the process fails.

However, in line with the wishes of the leadership of the Ijaw National Congress led by Professor Kimse Okoko and with guided direction and templates provided by Prince Tonye Princewill, son of the Amayanabo of Kalabari and member of the Niger Delta Technical Committee, we make the following submissions in line with templates as provided by Prince Tonye Princewill.

However, let us remind all that the continued existence of the problems of the Ijaw and Niger Delta territory is not due to a lack of ideas, tonnes of which have been provided for decades now, but by clear absence of political will and sincerity on the part of those who lord over the Nigerian State.

Over time, efforts aimed at correcting the injustices against our people have been cloaked in dubious politics and serpentine frivolities.

This tradition must come to an end.

Therefore, on behalf of the larger coalition and core units of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta MEND, the Reformed Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force and The Martyrs Brigade, we have made the submissions provided in the document.

The struggle is on unstoppable!

Cynthia Whyte

Spokesperson,

Joint Revolutionary Council

[Comprising the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta MEND, The Reformed Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force RNDPVF & The Martyrs Brigade]

The Submission of the Joint Revolutionary Council (Comprising the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta MEND, The Reformed Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force & The Martyrs Brigade to the Niger Delta Technical Committee on 13th of October 2008

1. Sovereign National Conference Vs Resource Control

Our demand for a Sovereign National Conference is irrevocable and non-negotiable. This demand is based on a sincere appraisal of the problems that plague the various ethnic nationalities that were forcefully conscripted into this dubious enterprise called Nigeria.

Each ethnic nationality must be allowed to decide if and whether they would like to continue in this uneventful and retrogressive sojourn within the Nigerian state.

Ijaws especially have had a very painful experience within the enterprise called Nigeria. A truly painful one driven not only by the insincerity of the Nigerian state towards resolving the Niger Delta question but also due the lack of real and structured leadership amongst the people of the Ijaw and Niger Delta territory.

Leaders of the region have continued to fall prey to cheap and cunning bargains from the forces that lord over the Nigerian state. They get easily lured by flimsy carrots dangled before them. Yet they always miss out from the real pie. Go and find out how many people from the Niger Delta have oil lifting rights or marginal field of strong commercial value.

It is therefore crucial and critical that a Sovereign National Conference be convened so that all people especially from the Niger Delta will be able to sit down and decide if they want to continue to this contraption called Nigeria.

2. Amnesty and Henry Okah Vs Peace and Rehabilitation

On behalf of all people of the Ijaw and Niger Delta territory with particular emphasis on those of us who chose the path of armed agitation against the Nigerian state, we demand herewith, an unconditional release of Henry Okah from the gallows of the Nigerian state.

There can be no true peace in the Niger Delta without the release of Henry Okah. To achieve this peace, select Ijaw and Niger Delta elders and stakeholders will be appointed to broker peace between Ijaw Leader Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari and Henry Okah.

Together, these two will build a process that will establish peace in the Niger Delta within a span of two weeks. They will be mandatorily provided every support they require by all the governments of the Bantustan states of the Niger Delta and will be given the unction to access and monitor efforts by the Nigerian state to bring development to the people of the Niger Delta.

Peace will come when the Nigerian state recognizes the need to give to our people what our people deserve. We have been cheated for too long.

Rehabilitation is a systematic process. Given the right response from the Nigerian state and those that lord over it, the process will run itself without inhibition.

3. Accountability in government Vs Corruption

Corruption had eaten deeply into the fabric of the Nigerian state. The worst type of corruption that plagues the Nigerian state today is that of political corruption.

Political corruption is far worse than every other because it acts as a catalyst for every other kind of corruption.

Umar Yar'Adua for instance, is the product of an intensely corrupt political process which deprived the citizens of the Nigerian state of their rights to choose a leader. We should therefore expect that there is a limit to which Yar'Adua can go in fighting corruption in Nigeria.

For instance, we believe that it would be impossible for Yar'Adua to convict corrupt ex-Governors who contributed billions to his election campaign.

As long as those that are called upon to lord over the Nigerian state continue to be products of a corrupt political system, the Nigerian state will continue to be home to the different shades of corruption that exist on God's earth.

Political corruption, as a matter of fact, remains the foundation of financial, moral and process corruption. It is the godfather of them all.

Political corruption is a core reason for the current unrest and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta because of the imposition of unacceptable, unpopular and dishonest leaders on the people of the Niger Delta through fraudulent elections and dubious selection processes.

Such leaders lack the nerve to defend the rights and interests of their people and the thought processes needed to improve the quality of life of the people they profess to serve.

The same thing goes for the appointment of ministers for ministries and other officers for parastatals and agencies. Too much incompetence is destructively heating up the polity

Corruption cannot be removed from the current polity until the Nigerian state gets its political system right and acceptable leaders are elected or appointed to positions of authority, privilege and power.

The political process must therefore be completely overhauled. We do not believe that the current people in government can have the boldness to confront the current situation as it is.

4. Environmental Integrity Vs Pollution

Our environment continues to be destroyed everyday by the criminal activities of oil and gas exploitation and exploration as these activities are carried out without strict conformance to acceptable international standards. Farmlands and creeks continue to bear the brunt of these activities.

In dubious collaboration with the government of the Nigerian state, Oil and gas companies have developed a structured system aimed at intimidating, harassing and assaulting communities which dare to rise up against them.

With little provocation, oil producing communities are razed down by ill-trained and ill-educated armed soldiers of the Nigerian state.

We do not believe that the current government has enough sincerity to deal with the situation. They are being held hostage by Big Oil and dubious people in government who reap millions of dollars every year from bribes and kick-backs.

However said, the government of the Nigerian state must enact a law and then effect an immediate ban on gas flaring. Gas flaring is killing our people and is giving us acid rain which destroys our waters, air, sea-life, houses and farmlands.

Punishment must be meted out for those whose facilities cause oil spillage. Most of the oil companies operating in the Niger Delta carry out their operations with standards that are far different from the kind of standards they operate by in their homelands. They say their goal is to cut costs. They forget that their attempts at cutting cost is also costing us our lives, heritage and livelihood.

They refuse to provide structured and timely maintenance of oil production facilities and allow these equipments decay and rot. This decay in turn causes facility failure and results in spillages many of which remain uncontained and uncompensated for.

5. JTF Vs Militants..Ogomudia

Not a few people agree that brigandage has crept deeply into the current unrest and armed agitation in the Niger Delta just the same way as financial recklessness has crept into the affairs of those who claim to have been given the mandate to govern their people.

The Joint Task Force is not any different. Today, they have become an added burden on the communities and societies over which they were called upon to police and administer peace and security.

More than 70% of the soldiers deployed under the JTF tag are themselves worse brigands than the so-called criminal elements that they were called upon to check. Most of these soldiers are very poorly educated and heavily unschooled in the art of peace keeping. Many of them are criminals who have infiltrated the armed forces of the Nigerian state the same way 'criminals' have infiltrated the ranks of the heroic combatants of the Ijaw and Niger Delta struggle.

Let it be known that most members of the Joint Task Force are gun runners, oil bunkerers, petty thieves and not peace and security keepers.

Evil begets evil. As long as the Nigerian state continues to deploy criminal elements as members of JTF, peace will elude the Niger Delta for violence will always beget violence.

6. Criminality

There are criminals everywhere. The best way to deal with criminality is through extensive cleansing. The Nigerian state needs total cleansing and this must start from the top.

From the criminals who rigged elections by stuffing and stealing ballot boxes to those who were elected by such processes and those who steal and misappropriate billions from the coffers of government, criminality is criminality and should be punished.

What we have in the Niger Delta today is a case of criminals in uniform and criminals in the creeks. Bandit soldiers who rape and assault women, extort monies and personal properties from wayfarers, bully innocent people, engage in oil bunkering, sea piracy and gun running etc.

7. Ijaw and Riverine dichotomy – Willinks Commission

We believe that the leadership of the Ijaw National Congress (INC) and the Conference of Ethnic Nationalities in the Niger Delta have already made submissions in this regard.

Their submissions stand.

However, let us remind ourselves that the special status that was recommended by the Willinks Commission for the Ijaws in the Niger Delta and their Ogoni brothers as a result of their peculiarly difficult terrain has now been bastardized into a 9-state Niger Delta Development Commission thereby diluting the efficiency of planned interventionist programs leaving the Ijaw territory largely underdeveloped.

We demand therefore that the Special Status recommended by the Willinks Commission for the Ijaw territory be immediately and clearly declared, restored and effected.

8. Underdevelopment

With all its wealth, the Niger Delta today is much too underdeveloped with the Ijaw territory being the most affected. We cannot add anything more but demand that the Technical Committee work towards ensuring that past reports be immediately acted upon without delay.

The Willinks Commission Report must be interfaced with the more recent Ogomudia Report to ensure the deployment of timely, strategic and people driven intervention

measures and not the phoney programs and policies that we have witnesses in time past.

To fast-track development in the Niger Delta region especially in the much challenged Ijaw territory, we demand therefore the following:

- **Jobs & Businesses** - Communities in the Ijaw and Niger territory should be given stronger participatory roles in the oil and gas industry. This will strengthen the creation of jobs and establishment of more businesses across the region. Such participatory roles include: recruitment of more indigenes of the Ijaw and Niger Delta territory, award of oil industry contracts and related privileges to qualified businesses owned by Ijaws and Niger Deltans. Ijaw businesses must be allowed to reap from the tremendous windfalls that abound in the oil and gas industry. Oil lifting rights and ownerships of oil fields must be provided to interested indigenes of the Ijaw and Niger Delta territory who demonstrate competence to deliver on stated and expected objectives. While the Otedolas, Dangotes, Kase Lawals, Danjumas and many other non-Niger Deltans have been richly compensated and have become billionaires with our oil wealth, our people remain largely shortchanged. This trend must be stopped immediately. The core benefit captors of the proceeds and profits from the oil industry are largely non-Ijaws and Non-Ijaws. Our oil must be used to build our people. There will be no need for oil exploitation in the Niger Delta if our oil will continue to be our curse. Let us remind ourselves that Ijaws who are occupiers of the major riverine areas where oil and gas exploration and exploitation activities take place have been rendered jobless as result of the destructive effect of exploration activities and the toll it has taken on their core occupations of fishing and farming. These loss of jobs remain a key driver of the current unrest in the Ijaw and Niger Delta territory. It is therefore expedient that Ijaws be given strong consideration in recruitment and appointment into the oil and gas industry. This demand cannot be negotiated. It is a prerequisite for lasting peace in the region.
- **Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF)** – We demand that the Petroleum Technology Development PTDF and its operations including award of educational scholarships should be an exclusive preserve of the people of the Ijaw and Niger Delta territory whose lands bear the oil and gas resources whose proceeds fund the program. The current structure of the PTDF is wholly defective and a slap on the face of the people of the Ijaw and Niger Delta territory.

It is atrocious to channel the funds generated from petroleum resources harvested from the Ijaw and Niger Delta region to other regions except there is a surplus.

While a major segment of the Niger Delta lack good roads and proper infrastructure, billions of naira that have been accrued from crude oil has been used to convert Abuja, the federal capital territory while hinterland and

terrain-challenged oil producing communities in the Niger Delta have been left to wallow in abject poverty and rejection.

An intensive and aggressive campaign for human capital development in the Niger Delta must be commenced using funds from the Petroleum Technology Development Fund.

There are too many ill equipped schools in the Niger Delta and too many families who cannot provide good education for their children and wards. This evil must be contained and corrected immediately.

Proceeds from the Petroleum Technology Development Fund should be wholly channeled to upgrading the quality of education in all the nooks and crannies of the Niger Delta.

All universities in the Niger Delta must be brought to world class standard. All qualified students of the Niger Delta should be given immediate scholarship to any university of their choice in any part of the world and more vocational centers must be established with funds from PTDF.

Anything less will not be accepted.

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